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ABSTRACT

The properties of one of the structures of politeness in the romance languages, the deference system connected with the use of conditional tenses, are analyzed in this paper. Although only Spanish examples are given, the conclusions also apply to French, Italian and Roumanian. The first part of the paper analyzes politeness in relation to its applicability to different illocutionary acts together with the types of sentences that may express them; the second part relates the conclusions of the first part to linguistic theory. Politeness is possible only in those speech acts in which greater control is assigned to the hearer than the speaker, and where the hearer must do something. Therefore, assertions, commands or acts of granting permission cannot be uttered in the polite form, whereas making suggestions or giving advice can be. Sentences with performative verbs or intonation contours and conditional markers fit easily into a linguistic formal theory of semantics. The case of conveyed illocutionary forces is more problematic. This form of politeness is contextual or pragmatic. This separation into two areas, however, seems artificial, since the rules that have been considered seem to function in a similar way and under similar conditions whether "semantic" or "pragmatic." (CPM)

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A Speech Act analysis of polite verb-forms in Romance

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Introduction*

In this paper I will study some of the properties of one of the structures of politeness in the Romance Languages: the deference system connected with the use of conditional tenses, as in example (1):[1]

(1) a. ¿Podría Vd. abrir la ventana? 'Could you open the window?'

b. Est-ce que vous pourriez ouvrir la fenêtre?

c. Potrebbe aprire la finestra?

Even though the rest of the paper will include Spanish examples exclusively, the conclusions apply to other Romance languages as well. In particular, I have ascertained that French, Italian, and Roumanian exhibit the same properties as Spanish with respect to their conditional deference structures. I will limit myself to examples with first person or second person subjects, and I will not discuss third person subjects.

For my discussion I will analyse politeness in terms of Speech Acts and their necessary conditions. The paper is organized as follows. A first part presents an analysis of politeness in relation to its applicability to different illocutionary acts together with the types of sentences that may express them. I will first consider examples in which a performative verb or an intonation contour indicates in an overt way the illocutionary force of the sentence. I will then study examples where there is no overt illocutionary force indicator

but where the force is conveyed through conversational postulates that are identical for non-polite and polite forms. As a third case, I will discuss a number of examples in which the polite verb functions as an illocutionary force indicator, and where polite and non-polite sentences relate to different Speech Acts. My conclusion in the first section of the paper will be that politeness operates in a similar way in these three types of sentences. Politeness is applicable in cases where the illocutionary force includes a per-locutionary effect on the Hearer (e.g. roughly, where there is an attempt to get the Hearer to do something) as one of its conditions, and where the Speaker is not in a position of control or authority over the Hearer. For example, requests and suggestions may be polite, but commands or

the act of granting permission are not. This situation obtains whether the illocutionary force is overtly indicated, or conveyed.

A second part of the paper relates the conclusions of the first part to linguistic theory, in particular to questions of semantic interpretation and pragmatic inferences. My conclusion will be that there seems to be a number of similarities between processes that in the current terminology are "sentence rules" (Chomsky 1975), or rules that belong to a formal theory of grammar, and those that belong to a theory of pragmatics, irrespective of how these two types of rules relate to the rest of the grammar. In view of the material discussed in this paper, it would appear that, in relation to politeness, semantic rules and pragmatic inferences are difficult to differentiate in their functioning.

I. Politeness and Speech Acts.

As I have already mentioned, polite conditionals pertain to the control of the situation that the Speaker is willing to grant the Hearer, and are not connected with social ranking in a direct way, even though they are related to the relative positions of Speaker and Hearer. Polite conditionals are connected with those Speech Acts in which the Hearer has some degree of control over the action of event which is predicated, and where the Speaker does not have greater control than the Hearer.

1.1. The distinction between Speech Acts that involve the control, knowledge, or commitment of the Speaker, and those that

involve the Hearer can be seen by comparing promises to requests. A necessary condition for a promise (what Searle (1969) terms the essential condition)[2] is that it is the undertaking of an obligation to perform a certain act; promises involve the commitment of the Speaker to do something among their felicity conditions. A request, on the other hand, is an attempt to get the Hearer to do something. Requests do not necessarily involve the commitment of the Speaker to do anything, but attempt to place the Hearer under a certain obligation. Politeness in Romance is applicable to Speech Acts where the so-called essential condition is, in part, that the Hearer has knowledge or control over the action predicated, while the Speaker does not to the same extent. (Later on I will return to the relative standing of the Speaker versus the Hearer). In other words, politeness is suitable in those instances in which it is not the case that the Speaker has more direct knowledge or control of the state of affairs talked about than the Hearer. Therefore, promises cannot be uttered in a polite form, while requests and questions can, as we can see in the following examples:

(2) a. Prometo ayudarle 'I promise to help you'

b. Prometería ayudarle 'I would promise to help you'

(3) a. ¿Me puede ayudar? 'Can you help me'

b. ¿Me podría ayudar? 'Could you help me'

(2a) can constitute a promise, but (2b), its counterpart with a conditional form, is not a promise, and, of course, it cannot be a polite promise either. (3a) may be a request for help or information;

(3b) is also a request, but it is more polite than (3a). That is to say, (3a) and (3b) represent the same kind of Speech Act, but with different degrees of politeness, while (2a) and (2b) are not the same type of Act.[3]

Sentences that count as assertions cannct have a polite form because they imply that the Speaker has more direct knowledge about the state of affairs talked about thar the Hearer:

(4) a. Te estoy ayudando tanto como quieres 'I am helping you as much as you want'

b. Te estaría ayudando tanto como quieres 'I would be helping you as much as you want'

(4a) counts as an assertion, but (4b) does not. Another dimension of assertions that prevents them from falling under the scope of the grammar of politeness is that their force is not necessarily connected with an effect on the Hearer.

I pointed out previously that the relative standing of the Speaker versus the Hearer in connection with their respective control was part of the essential condition of those Speech Acts where politeness is applicable. If the Hearer has some measure of control but the situation is such that the Speaker is in a position of authority over the Hearer, the Speech Act is not within the grammar of politeness. Commands, for example, cannot be uttered in a polite form, as we can see by comparing (5a) with (5b):

(5) a. Le exijo que asista a clase 'I demand that you come to class'

b. Le exigiría que asista a clase 'I would demand that you come to class'

(5a) is an order, but (5b) is not. Commands include in their essential condition the authority that the Speaker has over the Hearer. The uttering of a command counts as an attempt to get the Hearer to do something, like a request, but only by virtue of the authority or control of the Speaker over the Hearer. A similar situation is found when the Speaker grants permission for the Hearer to do something; here again there is a relationship of authority that prevents the utterance from having a polite rendition:

(6) a. Te doy permiso para que te acuestes a las nueve
'I give you permission to go to bet at nine'

b. Te daría permiso para que te acostaras a las nueve
'I would give you permission to go to bed at nine'

(6a) constitutes an act of granting permission, but (6b) does not.

Making suggestions, or offering advice can be attempts to get the Hearer to do something, but these Acts lack the authority relationship found in commands, and they can be uttered politely:

(7) a. Le sugiero que asista a clase 'I suggest that you come to class'

b. Le sugeriría que asistiera a clase 'I would suggest that you come to class'

(8) a. Le aconsejo que sea prudente 'I advise you to be careful'

b. Le aconsejaría que fuera prudente 'I would advise you to be careful'

Both (7a) and (7b) constitute suggestions, and (8a-b) are pieces of

advice.[4] It is an interplay between the relative positions of Speaker and Hearer with respect to their commitment, knowledge, or control that defines this type of deference system in Romance. Since honorific pronouns relate to the relative social position of Speaker and Hearer, there could be an area of contact between the two politeness systems of Romance. However, that is a question which I will not pursue here.

In brief, I have attempted to show so far that politeness is possible only in those Speech Acts in which greater control is assigned to the Hearer than the Speaker, and where the Hearer must do something. The Speech Acts that I have considered can be divided into two groups with respect to the co-occurrence of politeness and intended perlocutionary effects.[5] Speech Acts that can be polite (requests, questions, suggestions, the giving of advice...) have always in their essential condition an intended perlocutionary effect. Those Speech Acts where politeness is not applicable can be essentially connected with perlocutionary effects (commands, the granting of permission), or lack such an effect among their conditions (promises). This connection between politeness and effects on the Hearer is not accidental, it is an essential relationship, as we shall later see.

1.2. Up to this point, I have discussed examples whose syntactic structure has a performative verb that constitutes an indicator of the illocutionary force that the utterance is to have: prometer for promises in (2); exigir for commands in (5); dar permiso for granting permission in (6); sugerir for suggestions in (7);

aconsejar for advice in (8). I have also presented two examples (1-3) where the illocutionary force indicator is an intonation contour. In other words, all of the sentences I have presented so far have explicit illocutionary-force indicating devices, and politeness pairs up with certain of those devices but not with others. From the point of view of the linguistic grammar of politeness in Romance the situation appears quite simple at this stage. We could provide a semantic rule that would interpret conditionals on main clause verbs that do not belong to if ... then structures as politeness markers, when the main verb is a performative with an intended perlocutionary effect that is not tied to the control or authority of the Speaker over the Hearer. A traditional compositional rule that would match the reading of the conditional tense with that of the main verb would then be sufficient for the interpretation of politeness in Spanish. Or, in the case of intonation contours, a traditional Question-morpheme in underlying structure would be the element to be interpreted together with the conditional. As you know, there are other ways of phrasing this approach that would be more or less equivalent.

I will now discuss two more types of cases that complicate this simple relationship between politeness and the grammar of Romance, and that show that the line between rules of formal grammar and rules of pragmatics is a thin one. The two cases that are more problematic involve illocutionary forces that are not expressed but conveyed or conversationally implied.

Consider example (9):

(9) Quiero que me ayude 'I want you to help me'

It can convey a request for help, but from a literal point of view it does not have the form of a request (it is an indirect request or indirect Speech Act). Sentences of this type have been discussed by Gordon and Lakoff (1971), and I will adopt their analysis here. They propose that similar examples to (9) can constitute requests because they fulfill the conditions of a conversational postulate stating that a request entails certain conditions relating to the Speaker, and the assertion of any of those conditions may count as a request too. When a Speaker requests something of the Hearer, it is because he wants it to be done; an assertion about a volition of the speaker, such as (9) conveys a request.

Consider now example (10):

(10) Querría que me ayudara 'I would like you to help me'

(10) can be interpreted as a request as well. It has the same illocutionary force as (9), but the added dimension of politeness through the presence of the conditional tense. However, (10) is not an assertion, and it is not, as a consequence, asserting a Speaker-based condition, but it can be treated as following the same conversational postulate required for non-polite sentences. We can simply say that when a linguistic form such as (9) conversationally implies an illocutionary force in which the Hearer has more control than the Speaker in the way already discussed previously, the corresponding sentence with a conditional verb form, (10), will have the same

entailment and a polite interpretation. In the same manner that there are polite direct requests, suggestions, etc., there will be conveyed requests, suggestions, etc., and they will obey the same conversational postulates as non-polite conveyed requests, suggestions, etc. The prediction is that there will be no polite conveyed commands, etc., in the same manner that there are no overt polite commands, etc. In brief, politeness relates to illocutionary forces and not to those overt linguistic devices that may reflect them, such as performative verbs.

1.3. A third case that I will discuss involves sentences that have different illocutionary imports in polite and non-polite forms respectively, and where the illocutionary force is conveyed in the polite cases. Consider (11) below:

(11) Me gusta que lo haga 'I like you to do it'

(11) constitutes a statement about a psychological state of the Speaker, and it could sometimes be interpreted as a sign of approval, but it does not count as an attempt to get the Hearer to do anything; it is not a request or a suggestion. Compare (11) to its "polite' counterpart:

(12) Me gustaría que lo hiciera 'I would like you to do it'

The illocutionary forces of (11) and (12) are different under any possible interpretation. (12) has a "literal" hypothetical reading, and it is not an assertion, but it can also be interpreted in a vague way with an illocutionary force that counts as an attempt to get the

Hearer to do something, but not by virtue of the authority of the Speaker, i.e. a request, or a suggestion. In this case the conditional marker has a double role: it is the element that conveys the illocutionary force with perlocutionary effect, and, at the same time, an indicator of politeness. Without attempting to formalize the required conversational postulates, it seems that a polite reading must be related to a perlocutionary effect. In other words, a polite interpretation must count as an attempt to get a response from the Hearer. If this effect is not assured by some other aspect of the utterance, (through performative verbs, or intonation contours, or through independent conversational postulates), it is conveyed by the polite marker itself.

The meaning of the main verb contributes in an interesting way to the pragmatic postulates I am now discussing. Compare (11) and (12), with (13) and (14) respectively:

(13) Me molesta que se vayan tan pronto 'It upsets me that you are leaving so soon'

(14) Me molestaría que se fueran tan pronto 'It would upset me if you left so soon'

(13) is a statement about a negative attitude of the Speaker in relation to a state of affairs. It could be interpreted as a sign of disapproval. If uttered by a hostess when she sees the first guests at a party leave, it does not count as an attempt to prevent them from leaving, but accepts the departure as an unpleasant fact. Sentence (13) is similar to (11). (14), on the other hand, exhibits

a polite interpretation that constitutes a request for the guests not to go. It involves a perlocutionary effect, but because molestar is a verb that presents an unfavorable evaluation of a psychological state, the interpretation makes it a request not to do something. The negation is transported away from the attitudinal verb into the propositional information.

This phenomenon is quite general. Sentences with polite verbs that express favorable evaluations of psychological states (interesar 'to interest', encantar 'to delight, etc.) are interpreted as requests to do something. When the polite verb involves a negative assessment of an attitudinal state (apenar 'to sadden', enfadar 'to make angry'), the sentence is interpreted as a request not to do something. Again, without an attempt on my part to formalize these inferences, it appears that when the act benefits the Speaker, the conditional marker acts as the device that indicates that the Hearer must act in way appropiate to bring about the state of affairs that would benefit the Speaker; when the act is not seen as beneficial to the Speaker, the Hearer must act in a way that does not bring about the state of affairs. In this case there seems to be a combination of the semantic interpretation of the verb and the pragmatic inferences of illocutionary force connected with the polite marker.

The above examples are interesting because of their properties with respect to the intended perlocutionary effect. I will now turn to a case where the relative standing of Speaker and Hearer is emphasized by the polite marker, and where the illocutionary forces of polite and non-polite sentences differ because of the authority

relationship between Speaker and Hearer, and not because of the difference in perlocutionary effects. Consider (15a-b):

(15) a. Debe Vd. marcharse inmediatamente 'You must go immediately'

b. Debería Vd. marcharse inmediatemente 'You should go immediately'

(15a) can convey an order (it can also be a statement about an obligation of the Hearer); (15b) can convey a request, or a suggestion, but it is not a command. In both cases we are asking the Hearer to go immediately, so the basic intended perlocutionary effect is the same for both examples. The distinction between (15a) and (15b) resides in the relative position of the Speaker and the Hearer. In (15a) the Speaker can be in a position of authority and the sentence counts as a command; in (15b) the Speaker cannct be in a position of authority because of the politeness marker, and a downgrading must occur: the polite form counts only as a suggestion or request. Since the relative position of Speaker and Hearer is part of the essential condition of those Speech Acts in which politeness is applicable, if there is no element in the utterance that ensures that the Speaker is not in a position of authority over the Hearer, then the polite marker itself conveys the greater control of the Hearer (the use of the conditional voids the authority of the Speaker).

All the cases I have presented up to now have been essentially connected with an intended perlocutionary effect if they belong to the grammar of politeness. However, since the examples I have used predicate

future Acts of the Hearer, it could be argued that the meaning of the embedded sentence is responsible for the perlocutionary nature of the polite Acts so far considered, and that there may be other types of Speech Acts, with polite forms, but no intended perlocutionary effect. To show that this is not the case, I turn now to two additional examples, and the situations in which they are appropiate.

(16) a. No quiero molestarle 'I do not want to disturb you'

b. No querría molestarle 'I would not want to disturb you'

Suppose that either (16a) or (16b) is uttered by someone who, after knocking on a door, opens it and finds that the person whom he intended to see is busy. Notice that from the point of view of the form of (16a-b), these sentences do not predicate any future Act of the Hearer, but they express an intention of the Speaker about his own actions, namely, not to disturb the Hearer. However, (16a) and (16b) are not equivalent Speech Acts and the distinction lies in the intended perlocutionary effect. (16a) states an intention that the Speaker can fulfill independently of the Hearer. If I were to utter (16a), I would be, for example, under the impression that I am interrupting something, and that I am indeed disturbing the Hearer. I would for instance close the door again, and walk away. If I were in my office, and if someone opened my door, uttered (16a) and then walked in, I would find the action inappropiate. My reaction would be something like 'If he says that he does not want to disturb me, why does he act in the way which is most likely to disturb me!'. Another situation in

which I would utter (16a) would be if I walked very quicky into a friend's office, picked up a book, and walked out again, without expecting my friend to do or say anything. In other words, there is no intended perlocutionary effect that is essential; when uttering (16a) there is nothing which is expected from the Hearer in a necessary way.

(16b) is quite different. It can be uttered while the Speaker walks tentatively into the office, while waiting for some response from the Hearer. I would utter (16b) when walking into a friend's office if I intended to stay. In these two situations it constitutes a request for permission to come into the office. That is to say, the polite interpretation of (16b) is associated with a response from the Hearer, it places the Hearer under the obligation to do something, even when there is no action of the Hearer which is predicated. The Speaker who uses a polite form presents the situation in such a way that the conditions necessary to bring about the state of affairs talked about depend more on the Hearer than on the Speaker. In the case of (16b) the message is that the Speaker does not know whether he is disturbing the Hearer or not, and unless there is a response from the Hearer, the Speaker will not be able to comply with his intention not to disturb. From the point of view of the grammatical form of sentences of the type of (16b), it can be said that if a perlocutionary effect is not assured by some aspect of the structure, then the polite marker functions as the indicator of the perlocutionary effect that fulfills part of the essential condition of any polite Speech Act.

I have found some disagreement about the illocutionary force of

sentences such as (16a) in the different Romance languages I have considered. (16a) can be used as a request, and as such, includes an intended perlocutionary effect in a essential way. In that case, (16b) does not provide evidence for the independent perlocutionary effect of the polite marker itself. However, it is not difficult to find many other examples to motivate the essential connection between politeness and "perlocutionarity", and where there is no disagreement among Romance speakers. Consider (17a-b):

(17) a. Me gusta ir a Paris 'I like to go to Paris'

b. Me gustaría ir a Paris 'I would like to go to Paris'

(17a) is not a request, or a suggestion, but (17b) is one. There is no future act of the Hearer which is predicated in either case, but (17b) includes an intended perlocutionary effect in its meaning because of the polite marker.

At this point it is possible to relate the hypothetical reading and the polite reading in the sentences I have been discussing. I said previously that the two interpretations where connected, and I will now clarify my remark. The hypothetical reading of the sentences presented in this paper predicates a possible future state of affairs that could be realized under conditions that do not depend on the Speaker, but that are left unspecified. The polite reading shares this meaning of the hypothetical reading; it involves vague and unspecified conditions that do not depend on the Speaker. However there is an additional dimension in the polite interpretation, the unspecified conditions depend on the Hearer. Under this analysis, it is not an accident that the conditional tense is used to reflect hypothesis and politeness, politeness is perceived as a meaning derived through certain pragmatic inferences from hypothetical readings under the conditions that have been the subject of this paper. In brief, politeness is conveyed when a hypothetical sentence is representative of a Speech Act that counts as an attempt to get the Hearer to do something but not by virtue of the authority, control, or knowledge of the Speaker.

Having presented a Speech Act analysis of politeness in Romance, I would like to discuss how politeness relates to the grammar of the Romance languages in a general way, and the problems that this material presents for current linguistic theory.

II. Politeness and linguistic theory.

As I have already noticed in the previous section, the distinction between conveyed and overt illocutionary devices poses different problems for the interpretation of politeness. Sentences that have

in their syntactic structure performative verbs, or intonation contours, and conditional markers, fit easily into a (linguistic) formal theory of semantics because their hypothetical and polite readings are a function of the structure of those sentences. Politeness derives from the combination of the conditional marker and the main verb of the sentence, and any type of compositional semantic interpretation developed in transformational grammar could take care of this situation in a traditional way.

The case of conveyed illocutionary forces is more problematic. Politeness in Spanish is sensitive to conveyed meanings. To explain why certain conditional sentences are seen as polite while others do not have polite readings, it is necessary to use the notion of conveyed illocutionary force. However, we are providing interpretations for a fixed linguistic form, a "conditional" tense, and we must be able to relate politeness to the linguistic behavior of conditionals. For cases of conveyed meaning I have taken as basic the Speech Act, and I have derived the meaning of the sentences I have presented from the entailments of certain linguistic Acts. This is a politeness which is contextual or pragmatic, where the meaning of the linguistic form is derivative from the conditions required from making requests, suggestions, etc.

Consider these two cases and their rules of interpretation under some recent suggestions by Chomsky (1975). It would seem that the rules of interpretation applying to politeness in the case of overt performative verbs are the standard semantic rules that could apply to logical structure as rules of sentence grammar. The processes that

account for the reading of sentences with conveyed meaning would be assigned to a theory of pragmatics, and constitute a second type of semantic interpretation rule that involves contextual factors. Under this light, portions of the grammar of politeness would be described by formal (linguistic)semantics, and portions of it by a pragmatic component in terms of conversational postulates and similar rules, and the two kinds of processes would contribute to semantic interpretation.

It seems to me that this separation of the two areas of the grammar of politeness is artificial since the rules that we have been considering seem to function in a similar way and under similar conditions whether "semantic" or "pragmatic". In general, a Speech Act which counts as an attempt to get the Hearer to do something but not by virtue of the Speaker's authority over the Hearer will have a linguistic formulation which is polite. Some sentences reflect the conversational postulates they follow in a more direct way in their grammatical structures than others, but if a linguistic form is interpreted as polite, it is because it has the same pragmatic inferences as other polite sentences of the language. In other words, it seems to me that it is possible to account for politeness in this area of the grammar of Spanish by taking the notion of Speech Act as basic and the notion of the meaning of a sentence as derivative from it. By looking at the conditions of the linguistic acts in which politeness figures, it is possible to account for the linguistic formulations of the sentences which express them, from the point of

view of their meaning and their implications.

The other approach, to take "polite" sentences as basic to obtain a semantic description of politeness built on these sentences and their parts, without taking into consideration the relative positions of Speaker and Hearer, and other contextual factors, seems to me more problematic.

These two approaches to the notion of meaning constitute an important area of discussion in philosophical semantics, but it could be argued that in linguistics they are equivalent, if a grammar is supplemented with a pragmatic component that, together with a semantic component, provides (linguistic) semantic interpretations. In other words, if it is accepted that contextual factors, pragmatic postulates, etc., contribute to semantic interpretation in natural language, the question of directionality that philosophers discuss in a general way may not be an issue in linguistics, but only if we are willing to accept a pragmatic level or component. The position that pragmatic factors play a role in determining meaning has been held by a number of schools of linguistics throughout the 20th century, and as such it is quite traditional, even though it has not, and it is not, universally accepted. The material in this paper has indicated how pragmatic factors contribute to the interpretation of politeness in Spanish, but it has also shown that the way those pragmatic factors contribute makes it difficult to separate "strict" rules of semantics from rules of pragmatics. The operations of the two components, once they are incorporated into the description of natural language, may function in a similar manner, to account for similar meanings.

The point of view I have taken towards politeness in Romance is linguistically oriented, and as such, quite narrow. Before I conclude the paper, I would like to suggest that polite linguistic acts constitute a subset of polite acts in general, and that it seems probable that linguistic polite acts follow the same rules as other instances of polite behavior not based on language. I will mention two examples of polite actions that do not depend on language and connect them, in passing, to the conditions I have proposed for polite utterances.

Politeness is related to attempts to get a person to act by imposing an obligation on that person. Consider first the polite act of opening a door for someone to pass: it counts as an attempt to make that person go in or go out, irrespective of his intentions in certain cases; it also places an obligation on the person, who must then go in or out. For example, I have at times rushed to a door, and gone out much more quickly than I intended, because somebody had held the door open for me.

A more subtle example involves the behavior of men with respect to women when going up or down the stairs. I learned as a child, from a book of etiquette I once read, that the man precedes the woman when going down, but he follows when going up. Presumably, this type of behavior allows the man to prevent the woman from falling down the stairs in either case. In my experience, this rule is never followed (the man follows the woman in either case, he does not precede), and I would speculate that it goes against the essential conditions of politeness. Letting someone precede imposes a clear obligation of going up or going down, it counts as an attempt to get the other person to behave in the intended way. When

somebody is left behind, the action does not count as an attempt to get that person to do anything, and it is not an instance of polite behavior. If these speculations can provide the path for a general analysis of politeness, then there could be areas of the grammar of natural language which can be better understood from the point of view of a logic of Action than from the point of view of language.

Footnotes

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[1]The system of polite verb forms is independent from the grammar of honorific pronouns: tú vs. Usted, in standard peninsular Spanish. Those pronouns may be used to indicate degree of acquaintance, formality, distance, or age; that is to say, to mark in general the social rank of the individuals involved in the Speech Act. Honorific pronouns will not be considered in this paper, even though some common notions may be needed when describing the system of honorific pronouns vs. polite verb forms, as we shall later see.

[2]Throughout this paper I will be using the analyses and the terminology found in Searle's Speech Acts, together with the terms first created by Austin in How to do things with words. My indebtness to their work is quite evident.

[3]All the conditional sentences discussed in this paper have a hypothetical interpretation. I will consider that the hypothetical reading of the conditional is the literal sense, and that the polite reading is an extension of the literal sense under the conditions that constitute the topic of this paper. I will therefore consider that hypothetical and polite interpretations are related to each other. The common factor in the two kinds of readings is a limitation of the contribution of the Speaker to the Act. In those cases in which the involvement of the Speaker is part of the essential condition of the Speech Act, the conditional operator blocks or voids the illocutionary force (a promise is not a promise if in the conditional). In those instances in which the contribution of the Speaker is not part of

the essential condition, the illocutionary force is not blocked by the conditional tense, and a polite interpretation is then possible (a request is still a request when uttered in a polite form).

[4]I point out again that (7b) has a hypothetical interpretation that does not constitute a suggestion. For example, if a student who is always present asks a teacher 'What would you do if I was always absent from your course?', he can be answered with (7b), while not receiving any suggestion at present. Another possible reply is, of course, (6b). The distinction is that (6b) does not have an interpretation as a present order, while (7b) can constitute a polite, present suggestion.

[5]As it is well-known, perlocutionary effects are the consequences of the Speech Act on the Hearer.

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